Interview with Alan W. Lukens

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR ALAN W. LUKENS

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Today is November 17th, 1989. This is an interview with Ambassador Alan W. Lukens. This is being done on behalf of the Oral History Program of the Association for Diplomatic Studies. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Could you give me a little idea of where did you come from, your background.

LUKENS: All right. I was brought up in Philadelphia. I went to the Episcopal Academy, went off to Princeton and had one year when the war came along in '43. I spent three years in the Army divided between the ski troops in Colorado and the 20th Armored Division in Europe.

Q: Why didn't you go on to the 10th Division?

LUKENS: I was in the 10th Mountain Division but they suddenly skimmed off a couple of us to go Indiana to learn Turkish, and that came to a quick close three months later when they needed cannon fodder so I ended up in the 20th Armored Division as a forward artillery observer. I went back to Princeton in February of '46; got my degree in the Woodrow Wilson School in '48; and then went over to Europe where I did a little studying in both France and Spain for a year; came back and taught school for two years and

worked toward an M.A. at Georgetown here; then joined the Foreign Service—actually at that point, USIS, in 1951.

Q: What led you to the Foreign Service?

LUKENS: I think just an interest in foreign affairs as I was growing up. My father was very interested in that, although he was a Philadelphia lawyer, but his whole interest was in Europe where he'd served actually in both World Wars. I don't know exactly what it was, but I got itchy feet in the Army and decided to come back and head in that direction and after fooling around Europe in Spain and in France and other places in that year, I was convinced that that was what I wanted to do.

Q: Why would you get into the Information Service? Was it USIA at that time?

LUKENS: I had written some papers about Turkey and so I applied at that point—I was waiting for the Foreign Service exam to come through and I managed to get a job through a fellow named Hunt Damon who then was the Desk Officer for Turkey, and he took me on. So in August of '51, I went off to Ankara as a Cultural Affairs Assistant at the rate of $3500 a year.

Q: You were in Ankara from '51 to '52 and Istanbul '52 to '54. What was the situation as you saw it in Turkey? Our relations with Turkey in those '51 to '54 period?

LUKENS: That was a very happy time. We'd just started the Marshall Plan. Ambassador Wadsworth was one of the old timers—he built golf courses, and so on, but he was succeeded by George McGhee who was of course a political appointee but one with a great deal of clout and energy. And we began our whole military and aid programs at that point, very small then compared to what they are now. But the Turks were reaching toward us and I think it really was a very historic period of opening up to Turkey with the Truman Doctrine.

Q: What was the feeling of our people at the Embassy and our Consulate General? Do you think the Turks were going to use the term "make it" or did we feel that this was sort of pouring money down a rat hole.

LUKENS: I don't think so in those days at all. There was tremendous enthusiasm, there were so many things to do, roads to build, schools to work on. We worked hard in USIS then, and I did an awful lot of English teaching. I ran up and down from Istanbul to Edirne, a little town on the Bulgarian border where the mayor, whose curious name was Ataktark, was a great buddy and I gave him private English lessons. I remember when he took me up to the forbidding-looking Bulgarian frontier where we climbed up a scaffolding and peered across the Iron Curtain. But the Turks were tremendously friendly. I made quite a lot of progress in Turkish, so I could get along and I've been fond of them ever since, and still try to keep up. Since then, of course, they've had all kinds of ups and downs in the military regime and so on. But at that particular point it was a rather stable country and they were so busy developing that they hadn't yet gotten into some of their internal squabbles.

Q: Then you went on as an Information Officer to Martinique?

LUKENS: Yes. I came back from there and at that point there was a sort of mix-up because USIA became separated from the Department, and I had passed the Foreign Service exam and the orals, but there was a big backup, so anyway they suddenly offered me a job as PAO in Martinique. That was a lot of fun because I was under two excellent bosses, both still very good friends, Clint Olson who later became Ambassador to Sierra Leone, and Bill Cobb who has done a number of things and now is the head of DACOR.

Q: DACOR stands for Diplomats and Consular Officers Retired.

LUKENS: That's right, I enjoy going there twice a week. I was PAO in Martinique. It was a three-man Consulate, and we covered Guadeloupe and French Guiana as well. I think I

took four trips down to French Guiana, where the main sight was Devil's Island. That was all very much virgin territory for the U.S. because before that there had been very little money for travel in that area.

Q: One always thinks of anything that's under French rule as being 1) being hostile to, and 2) being impervious to cultural activities from other nations—particularly United States. Did you find this true?

LUKENS: They were certainly sensitive, and the idea of pushing American ideas of democracy on the Martiniquais annoyed the French. The blacks, however, were very open to it and they were interested in civil rights developments in the U.S. The French, of course, were super sensitive because the three departments of Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana are considered complete integrated overseas departments of France. That was a myth, if you want, but it has still continued, although in recent years they've opened up very much to tourism. But in those days they were all enclaves of France and rather ridiculous ones in that the French effort to increase the birth rate in France had been applied to Martinique so people were getting astounding sums for producing a dozen children.

Q: Then you were back in the Department only for about a year or so?

LUKENS: I was back for almost two years in the Press Office and the job then was one of the first ones trying to publicize the Foreign Service, dealing with TV, and radio, and so on. We got little bits of anecdote from people along the lines of “what are you doing now?” But the program ran up against the usual problems of clearance and trying to get the Foreign Service, or the Department itself, to be its own best spokesman. And then I went up for three months to USUN as a Press Officer. USUN had to help out at the Assembly in 1957. Then at the end of '57 suddenly a call from PER came asking me if I'd be interested in working on the International Staff of NATO in Paris. So I jumped at that and headed off to Paris at the beginning of '58.

Q: What were you doing in Paris?

LUKENS: I was on the International Staff of NATO, one of a handful of young men who were assistants to the Secretary General, Paul Henri Spaak. I was the only American there and it was a bit of a dog robber, “gofer” job but very interesting. I met lots of people, and Eisenhower came over to the Summit Meeting during that period. We were in the old Palais Chaillot on the Seine River until it finally moved. It was an interesting way to see how multilateral organizations worked, and I think it was worthwhile.

Q: First, could you give me your impression of how Paul Henri Spaak worked, and how effective, or not effective, he was?

LUKENS: Spaak was very much of an European. It was a funny kind of a situation because you remember NATO was first in England and Lord Ismay, the first Secretary General, was very British oriented. And then when NATO moved to Paris and you had Spaak, a Francophone, running it. He had a funny little fellow, whose name slips me, who was a Frenchman, very secretive type, who was his Directeur de Cabinet, and it was very hard to find out what was going on in his office, although that was sort of one of my surreptitious jobs to help out the U.S. delegation from the inside. I worked directly for a wonderful Britisher, Lord Coleridge, a grandson of the famous Samuel Coleridge. He was a retired navy captain, a wonderful man. But his world and what he did there were totally different from Spaak's. Spaak was Mr. Europe. He had the original idea of European integration and so on and he tried to put that into effect. But he ran into resistance from the Anglophones—pretty much from us, from the Canadians, from the Brits, although the Germans, French, and Italians, kind of hopped on board with him. I think in the long run he had the future spirit of Europe, and he was probably a good man for the position at that point.

Q: But the way he was running this, as you saw it, was really for European integration rather than a military organization?

LUKENS: In those days the Americans were so dominant, we were so dominant on the military side that the Europeans chose to pretty much use the political side, the civilian side, for their purposes. I'm not sure you can blame them, but that's kind of what happened. So Spaak used the International Staff of NATO to begin to develop European unity and work on those channels. Sort of let the military side to the Americans which was the way it had originally been set up.

Q: Did you see any problems, that you were dealing with at the professional level, going off in different directions?

LUKENS: Some of it was a little esoteric. I was Secretary for a bunch of committees that were planning for the great days of disaster, petroleum planning, overseas shipping, internal European transport. We had meetings every couple of months, or twice a year, of all the NATO countries. All of the civil servants from their respective areas would come in and we'd develop these papers, argue over moot points, and all of this was a little remote because nobody really thought if another war came that anybody would be sitting around a table figuring out how NATO should organize train transport in Europe, for example. I think, hopefully, since then it's become a little more realistic than it was at that time.

Q: Talk about realism. Right now we're talking in November of 1989 and tremendous things are happening in Eastern Europe, and in the Soviet Union, and we're really re-thinking the whole NATO structure, will Germany unite. It's a time of great ferment as we're talking, but one of the questions that I think future historians will ask, and that is, how seriously did we think of the Soviet Union as a threat? And how realistic was that threat?

LUKENS: Well, I think we took the threat very seriously. How realistic it was is perhaps another question. I think one of the problems with NATO, and problems with the whole European structure with SHAPE and everything, is that the conventional wisdom kind of gets handed down from generation to generation. Perhaps that's going too far, but each turnover pretty much continues the same thing. When we were there, they developed

nuclear planning committees and there were various developments on weapons and this and that, but basically the focus of NATO was on the Soviet threat. There was very little advance thinking, or wondering what might happen if the threat changed. The threat was taken as a given and everybody worked on that rather than thinking how change could be brought about in the Soviet Union, or what we would do for contingency planning if something happened; as it has now.

Q: Well, how about the thinking about a integrated Europe? As you say, Paul Henri Spaak was really putting his interest here, and you were acting, I assume, although you were attached to his staff, obviously you had your liaison with the United States. How interested were our people at that time in '58 to '60 on the American side in the integration? How realistic did they think it was?

LUKENS: I don't think they were that interested. Of course, during that period de Gaulle came in and became the great leader in France and then eventually showed his antipathy toward the UK and the US, but balanced that with his rapport with Adenauer and trying to build up the esprit de corps of Western Europe which he considered, of course, to be France and Germany, with Benelux and Italy sort of trailing behind. I think we didn't give it much thought (European integration), we just considered NATO as more important. I remember arguments going on while the Europeans wanted to do it this way, or they wanted to transfer something to the Western European Unions. This is still happening. And we would block it and say this is a NATO affair, it should be kept in NATO. I think that's pretty much what went on. I don't think we ever came out expressly against European unity, but somehow we didn't want to muddy the works of NATO.

Q: By the way, were you all looking at the French internal situation at the time?

LUKENS: That was all kind of a separate drama. We were right there in the middle of Paris, during the famous 13th of May, '58 when all hell broke loose in Algiers and de Gaulle as a result of that came into power. It was very dramatic, and nobody knew whether

there would be an invasion of North Africa by the right wing or not. So, of course, that was very much the background, even though business went on almost too much as usual right there in the NATO Headquarters.

Q: At least under Spaak he was keeping everybody's eye on a hand on the helm, full-speed ahead, and let's let the French situation take care of itself more or less.

LUKENS: Yes, well I don't think there was much that NATO could do about it, except that basically Spaak and de Gaulle's viewpoints were somewhat similar, with Spaak being more of a diplomat and thinking more of central Europe per se, and de Gaulle obviously fixing on France. But, nevertheless, they were on somewhat the same wave length I would say, and I don't think Spaak was displeased to see de Gaulle come in.

Q: How about on the American side? How did the official Americans feel about de Gaulle?

LUKENS: I'm not so sure in that period. When I went back to Paris—we'll talk about that later—I saw a lot more of it at that point about how to deal with de Gaulle. At the beginning I don't think that much had happened, because that was before the Reform of the constitution and so, as you remember, he was just Prime Minister at first before the referendum on the constitution of the Fifth Republic was ever made.

Q: Then from Paris—from '60 you then go to another assignment.

LUKENS: I had always wanted to go to Africa, and requested that every time, particularly French Africa, with Personnel. And it happened that the Consul in Brazzaville, who had opened the post after the war, died of a heart attack at the end of '59. So they called me from Washington and asked if I'd like to go there. So I did. It was a little embarrassing, getting out of NATO, because it was supposed to be a longer assignment, but I found a friend in the U.S. delegation that took my place. So we went down there at the beginning of '60, and I was Consul in Brazzaville for the whole area of French Equatorial Africa. We had a Consul there during the war because Brazzaville was on the air route through

Brazil to supply the troops in the Middle East. There's a very funny book called The Body Missed the Boat about the supposed murder of the American Consul in Brazzaville in 1945. But just to recall for you, when de Gaulle set up his Free French movement in 1940, French Equatorial Africa was the only area that really stuck with him. There were Vichyites in North Africa and West Africa but in Brazzaville Governor General, Felix Ebou# from French Guiana, jumped on board with de Gaulle. So de Gaulle always had a warm feeling for this area and so France had kept it up. But there again, it was very much of a French colony with very little outside exposure. It consisted of Chad, Central African Republic, Congo and Gabon. The capital of the whole region was in Brazzaville and it was a very centralized kind of organization although there was a governor for each of the four areas, the High Commissioner General, was in Brazzaville, and he was very much of a pro-consul for France.

Q: And, when you were there, the Congo was part of France still?

LUKENS: It was French Equatorial Africa, it was a colony of France, and you had four different parts of French Equatorial Africa, as I just explained. This was the situation when I got there in early '60. Of course, without belaboring the point, that was the big year of African independence. And de Gaulle by that time had had his referendum throughout French Africa as to whether or not they would like to stay in the French commonwealth. They all voted to, gave the “grande oui,” except that Guiana refused and the French backed out of there in a very arrogant way.

Q: ...ungraciously.

LUKENS: ...so the Independence Ceremonies went on. At the beginning of that year you had the Mali Federation which then broke into Senegal and Mali. You had Togo and Cameroon, which had been German colonies, so they got their independence earlier in the spring of that year. Then, of course, the big event of the year, later, was the independence of Belgian Congo.

Q: You were sitting right across the river.

LUKENS: I was right across the river. I was on the delegation to the independence. It was headed by Paley of CBS, and Bob Murphy, and I went over there—and I'll never forget that day. I didn't know that much about internal politics but you had Kasavubu as president and Lumumba as premier. We were all sitting in the stands watching the parade, consisting of goose-stepping African soldiers led by Belgian—mostly Flemish non-coms, who were screaming at them as they went by in the parade. I said to my wife at that point, “This is not going to last. They won't accept this.” And, true enough, about one week later the “Force Publique” rose in mutiny and threw out the Belgian officers and non-coms. That's the beginning of that whole scenario.

Q: What was the situation in Brazzaville itself while you were there, the political situation, how did you deal with it?

LUKENS: The political situation there, as France foresaw, the French in Paris, was that they were eventually going to have to give independence to all of their colonies. They stalled as much as they could. There was a difference of opinion between Paris and de Gaulle, who wanted to move quickly, and the colonial administrators who thought that these colonies weren't ready for independence. At the last minute France engaged in a rather useless exercise which was to try to make French Equatorial Africa into one independent country. It had the name of URAC., Union de la Republique de l'Afrique Centrale. This trial balloon never got off the ground, mostly for a very good African reason; that all four African leaders in their respective countries wanted to be head of it. And they all wanted the capital. So it just didn't work. There was too much difference among the areas. The Gabonese, being the smallest and richest, didn't want to spend their future supporting the poorer elements like Chad and Central Africa.

So then you had the independence of Zaire and about the beginning of August with very, very short notice...

Q: 1960.

LUKENS: 1960, and I'll get into what we did in Zaire earlier. But, at the beginning of August, de Gaulle announced that independence would be given very quickly to the four countries of the Entente, in West Africa (Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Upper Volta—now Burkina Faso, and Niger). And my colleague, sitting there as Consul in Abidjan, Don Norland, had a very similar experience to mine, because he also covered four countries. Well, what happened was that at the beginning of August de Gaulle sent Henri Malraux, who was Minister of Culture, down as the representative to their independence celebrations. But the French attitude was very much that they were not really getting independence, but only reaching their maturity. And in each speech, both in West Africa and in Central Africa, Malraux went through his routine that “you're now twenty-one years old and you've come into your own, and you can have your bank account, but ma and pa are still there, and they're in Paris, and you shouldn't usurp the experience that you gained from your motherland, so to speak.” And the French decided that they would keep this a very closed ceremony. It turned out to be in my area, after they'd already been to West Africa, an independence every 48 hours, starting with Chad, Bangui, Brazzaville, and then Libreville. So I cabled all this to Washington, and said, “What are you going to do? We need messages, we need a representative to the independence.” Well Washington, being very cautious in those days about offending the French before the Kennedy era, went to the Quai d'Orsay and said, “What do you want us to do?” And they said, “Nothing.” Then the British did the same thing, and they told the British, “Nothing, we don't need any foreign representatives, you've got consuls, they're good enough. We don't even care if the consuls come,” they said in Paris.

So this all went back and forth with cables, and I was getting nowhere about getting anybody from Washington to make a fuss over the independence celebrations because we only had about ten days notice. So finally it became clear that I would be the representative, and I tried very hard to get a message. I couldn't get very far. That was, of

course, during the campaign in August of '60 between Nixon and Kennedy, and nobody was terribly interested in this area. So I drafted a message from President Eisenhower to each future president in the area, cabling them to Washington. They finally came back and said, “Okay.” They didn't change anything, and then I translated the message into French so that I could hand each President his at the time of each independence.

Q: I think it's very interesting because it shows where things ranked at the time. Particularly at the end of one administration, which really hadn't been very interested in Africa. Besides, too, so much effort was put, on our part, in keeping France happy and then later this spread over from the Algerian situation. I mean that was a battle that raged in the halls of the Department of State for a decade, I think, of where Algeria lay, and normally we came down on the French side rather than that of the colonials.

LUKENS: Although that would change, with Kennedy's position somewhat different. But you're absolutely right. That was one of the reasons, I don't think anybody in Washington cared enough at that point to take on the French as to what kind of ceremony there would be, or who would be our representative.

Anyhow, I was the senior Consul there. There weren't very many others. There was a fellow from Taipei, and there was a poor old Portuguese that didn't know what he was doing, and a rather obnoxious German, and a very nice Brit. So I said to them, “Look, if you're all going to be representing your respective countries, we've got to get to these damn independences somehow.” So I went to my good friend, General Sizaire, the head of all French troops in Central Africa, and I explained our dilemma. So finally he agreed that we could have a DC-3 to follow around the independences because there was no other possible way to be present, air flights being what they were. The French had two fancy planes; one for Malraux and his bunch of bureaucrats; and the other for the French press, and we followed along with this DC-3. But, contrary to the French attitude about downplaying the consular part of the ceremonies, the countries themselves, the Africans, were very happy to see us. It was quite amusing. In Chad, they had an old 1935 right-hand

drive car that somehow had been given to the governor, God knows how, an open car. So I heard about this and I managed to get my hands on that, but there weren't enough cars, so the Brit rode with me, and I had a little American flag that I tied on for the occasion.

So when we got down to Libreville in Gabon, I had to share a room with the Brit, so a little knock at the door came when we got there and this beautiful Gabonese said that she'd be part of our service of protocol. I slipped out the door and said, “Here comes a lady for you,” to my British friend. We had a lot of laughs over that. But the independences were very exciting, and they usually ended up with a speech by Malraux at midnight, the flag thing, the parade, and lots of African dancing. But in each case I was able to work in a private visit with the President, and take him the message that I'd written, and bring him greetings from our President, even though Eisenhower was not aware of this. It was quite a time.

Q: What were our plans? I mean all of a sudden we have these new countries, and what did we plan to do?

LUKENS: We didn't plan very much and that was the problem. We wanted to do something finally but rather too late to have much effect. We managed to get a—I forget exactly what it was—a hospital vehicle that could run around to the villages, sort of a half-track with an ambulance on top it. But it was better late than never. We didn't really get any kind of aid programs, or help, until the next administration came in. An awful lot was just done verbally trying to show how interested we were.

Q: How interested were people in the State Department about what was happening in Africa?

LUKENS: I think there were a few Africanists—the early ones—back in the Department that were very sympathetic that wanted to help but I don't think they could get anything through the White House, even as a kind of gesture. But I think the other problem that

confused this at the time, and most everybody working on Central Africa, was totally wound up in the affair in the Belgian Congo, Zaire. Maybe I should discuss that.

Q: Oh, yes, I want to move to that; but on this independence thing, just so readers can get an impression. Was there any sort of window of opportunity that really would have made any difference, or not, there, that we could have done something that we didn't do? Or did things pretty well play out, probably the way they would have, considering how we were at the time?

LUKENS: I think with hindsight they probably played out all right at the time. Of course, we were frustrated that we didn't get more, and that we weren't making more of these countries. Perhaps that's localitis. We thought that Washington should do more. I think with hindsight, had we built up their expectations too far, there would have been a disillusionment coming in later on, which, of course, set in later on anyway. So perhaps it was better to go slow.

Q: And also I assume there was the feeling that this really is going to be French turf for a long time.

LUKENS: Well, that was it, and that was the kind of rationale that came out of Washington, knowing there was no money and it really wasn't worth...that we had first of all the enormous problem in Zaire. We had historical commitments with Nigeria which was getting its independence the first of October; with Ghana already independent; of course Liberia; and there were enough other places in Africa where we were even then sort of over extended. Everybody felt, “Well, let the French take care of this area. We won't worry about it. The American interests there are very, very limited.”

Q: Did we see in—not Zaire—but in the area that you were representing, did you see at that time a communist/Soviet menace, or not?

LUKENS: No, there was none at all. Of course you have to remember that the French governors were still in place, French troops were in all the areas. The French governors from one day to the next changed their titles to “French Ambassador,” but it didn't change very much. Of course, the Communist threat came in later, particularly in Brazzaville. At that time there really wasn't any, and the entire commercial network was just totally French; perhaps Lebanese a bit too, and of course the CFA franc still tied them, as it still does, very much to the French financial side of it.

Q: Now let's turn to...there you are sitting across the river from the Congo, what were you doing, and how did you see this?

LUKENS: People knew that the old regime and system wouldn't last too long, but I don't think we were all that prepared, and certainly Washington was not. So my first word of impending disaster came on the walkie-talkie that I had with the DCM in Leopoldville, Bob McIlvaine. The walkie-talkie was on my porch—our Consulate was an old Belgian bank and the top floor was the Consul's residence, there was a big balcony and we could only use the walkie-talkie across the river because the phone didn't always work—it didn't work at all in fact. So at 5:00 in the morning I got a call from the Embassy that all hell had broken loose, and the Force Publique had broken out in mutiny, and that the whites basically, including Americans, were all commandeering ferries and coming across to Brazzaville.

So I got dressed and ran down to what was called “Le Beach,” where the ferry came in, and waited for it. There weren't all that many Americans who got off at the very beginning, perhaps 30 or 40, including dependents from the Embassy. We moved the official dependents right into our house at the Consulate, the others we housed with the French. The French weren't being very helpful at that point but they finally had to because they got a lot of pressure from Brussels. Most of the people were Belgian. And they turned a couple of schools over to take care of the people, and so on.

Then as the situation got worse, the search for Americans moved out to the bush, and finally there were Americans discovered all over the place, especially missionaries—some of whom had been there for years. They'd gotten lost, nobody knew who they were. But there was a fairly good missionary radio network. So what we finally did, was to set up a command post at the Consulate with the radios tied in with the missionaries. And meantime the Air Force had sent down a couple of helicopters and several other planes, so it was the only time in my life I could say I commanded an air force. We organized missions every day through this network out into the bush in the Belgian Congo to bring back these missionaries.

Then there was a big question about how to get them out of Brazzaville, and whether they should be evacuated, or what. So finally, after a lot of argument, the Department chartered a couple of PanAm planes and took the evacuees to Ghana. And then larger planes came in, finally, but they were mostly filled with Belgians, and all kinds of other people were loaded on them to get back to Europe. It was a very, very wild time. Of course the press came in and so on.

Meanwhile, on the political side, when all hell had broken loose, finally the Embassy over there—and you'd have to ask them exactly what happened.

Q: These are the ones in Leopoldville?

LUKENS: Yes. The Embassy thought that something had to be done and the (Belgian) Congolese—I forget which ones, I suppose Kasavubu, not Lumumba—asked for American help. They wanted American troops. At that point the Embassy had no communications except the walkie-talkie to me. So they passed this request to me, and I called the Department, and later on the Department came back and said, “Well look, see if they can ask for the UN. We don't want to come in there with American troops.” So this, of course, all took time, and in New York—that's a whole other story.

But finally the Embassy went back to the Congolese and got them to agree to request a UN force. At that point there was another breakdown—I think they must have had some communication, but they didn't at that time because I got the call again from the walkie-talkie saying, “Tell the Department to ask for the UN. We've got the okay from the Congolese.” After some tries I managed to get a long distance phone call through, but I got a Mr. Olson in Minnesota first; I've never figured that one out. I don't know how the hell that happened, but finally I got through to Washington and passed the request and that started the whole ball rolling for the UN support.

So the whole business of evacuating people, and getting them out of Brazzaville was complicated—I had terrible fights with the French about getting permits for these American planes to come in. One of the big planes carrying the helicopters was only about 100 miles away and they said they wouldn't let them land.

Q: Was this the local French commanders who just were being bloody-minded?

LUKENS: This was the Governor General.

Q: Did you have the feeling that he was just being nasty or was there another reason?

LUKENS: He was being nasty, he was being very French, saying it's their territory, and why do American planes have to come in, and that sort of thing. I said, as a very junior consul, I had to go in and say to him, “Look, if the French will not let these planes land, all hell will break loose. It will disrupt our relations, you will look very silly, and I will have to say that you refused to let them in.” Well, he backed down. The planes were practically there.

Q: But I mean this was more, his being bureaucratic, rather than orders from Paris.

LUKENS: I think this all came so fast that it wasn't cleared from Paris. I'm not sure of that.

Q: It sounds of that nature.

LUKENS: There was such a panic, and there were so many people, and they were bringing in the helicopters, we had to get some people out of the bush. I don't think our boys worried about clearances because they figured that NATO planes could go anywhere in the NATO area.

Q: Was Brazzaville independent at that time?

LUKENS: No, no. This was before—about the 7th, 8th, 9th of July. Brazzaville independence didn't come until the 15 of August. It would have been very different if that had been the case.

Q: How did you feel, there, about what was happening in the Belgian Congo? Did you feel this was the sort of thing that could spread, or did you feel the French had a different colonial policy, and also had a better set of troops, or something like that to keep it from spreading?

LUKENS: There was no question at that point of unrest in the French areas. You have to go back a little bit and remember that in '58 they had set up local parliaments so they had a Prime Minister—they didn't have much power in each place; and a Cabinet, a National Assembly, and all of that. And each Minister had a Frenchman sitting behind him. And you had the French troops, and you had the High Commissioner—the Governor General. So there were certain trappings of independence in place. And the French Africans were very, very disdainful of what had happened in the Belgian Congo. The Belgians were stupid, they didn't train people. The Congolese (Zairois) were particularly nasty to the Flemish because almost all the Belgian civil servants, and all of the military were Flemish. There were only a handful of Walloons, the Francophones. So you had the disdain about the way the Belgians had not prepared their people, and then you also had—which still goes on—a snobbism that the French Africans were much better educated than the Belgian

Africans, and that's still true. They feel very superior, even though they are very much fewer in numbers nowadays.

Q: Were there any other developments there during that time?

LUKENS: I think you had these two big things going on, the whole development in the Congo, Lumumba, and the UN coming in, leading to the fight in Katanga. And then simultaneously, but really with no connection, you had the independence of the four countries I was covering.

Q: What happened? All of a sudden you had four countries in your consular district.

LUKENS: Well, I thought that was the case from the very beginning but after independence I became Charg# d'Affaires and the conversion to the Embassy was rather simple. I carried an “Embassy of the United States” sign across on the ferry from our Embassy in Leopoldville and hung it up and that really was the only change. I had one Vice Consul who disappeared elephant hunting and very quickly retired from the Service after that. And I had a very nice secretary and for a long time that was it.

Q: In a way I'm surprised, because not only does nature abhor a vacuum, but also, if you've got four countries with ambassadorships dangling out there—this is raw meat to the Foreign Service. Was it again because of the elections?

LUKENS: No. Then you had a slight awakening during the campaign and Harriman took a trip all over Africa to show the interest of the Democrats. And I had quite a time introducing him around. He didn't know any French, and interpreting for him as he was giving civic lessons to the President of the Congo and the President of the National Assembly who later took over in a coup. This was quite a funny period. And then, what happened from the Republican side was Loy Henderson's farewell trip. He got a Pentagon plane and John Stutesman was with him, and they came out to all of the new areas—that was in the fall.

The routine that he went through was to ask each Chief of State if he wanted an American Embassy...

Q: ...Loy Henderson was the...

LUKENS: Loy Henderson had decided ahead, of course, that he wanted to have an American Embassy in each place but he went through the motions of asking each president. I'll never forget in the Chad, Tombalbaye, who was since murdered, poor fellow, was president and standing there in his long boubou...

Q: Boubou being a what?

LUKENS: That's the long white sack that the Chadians wear. We went in to see the President and I was interpreting. Henderson didn't know any French, and he would say, “Do you want an American Embassy?” And the President would say, “Oui, patron.” And then, “Do you want an Ambassador?” “Oui, patron.” And then, I'll never forget in Chad, in this same wonderful open car, sitting with Henderson as we drove out along the river, and he said, “Tell them that we want these ten acres for the American Embassy.” And the Minister of Defense, who was a 25-year old boy sitting in the front seat, kept saying, “Oui, oui, oui.”

The only problem with this little trip of Henderson's was that we had to buy property, or get it in each place. And unfortunately he'd sent a couple of goons out from FBO ahead of time, and these were heavy-handed guys that got in the hands of the French real estate market in each place, and started to line up houses and buildings. So there wasn't any great surprise when I landed there in a special plane with Henderson to ask if they wanted American Embassies, because these FBO clowns had already been trying to buy up property.

Anyway, it developed then that the plan was to have an Ambassador in Brazzaville for the four countries, but have a Charg# and an Admin Officer and a secretary communicator,

basically, in each of the other three. The first Ambassador to be named had been Consul General in Frankfurt, Wendell Blancke, and Henderson asked me whether I would like to stay on as his DCM, or be Charg# in one of the other places. So I chose Bangui and Fred Chapin (who has just died, poor fellow), was the one in Chad, and Walter Diamanti went to Libreville, and Leon Dorros, who served as DCM under Blancke in Brazzaville, followed by Hank Von Oss who is retired now, took over.

Q: One thing I have to add here. Wendell Blancke was my Consul General in Frankfurt and what a delightful person. I mean, to me, one of the nicest people, and most wittiest people I've ever met.

LUKENS: Yes, he was very funny, and he was just wonderful to us. He came in just before Christmas, and he had a marvelous sense of humor. He had a suitcase full of Christmas decorations, and he played the mouth organ. We were tiny at that point. The American colony for Christmas was my family and the secretary. In fact Blancke was so shocked when he got there, he said, “Where is everybody?” But I took him around in January, when we still had not opened the other posts, to present his letters at each place. And that was very amusing because he'd brought down his morning coat, and top hat, something that had never been seen in Central Africa. In Chad and Central Africa they refused and said they would be embarrassed to have him dressed that way, as they didn't have any clothes themselves. That made him mad. But when we went to Libreville—they love to dress up there—Leon Mbg was president, so he was able to put on the full regalia.

Q: How did you set up our post, our Embassy, in...

LUKENS: Bangui, Central African Republic.

Q: Could you describe the situation?

LUKENS: Well, I'd been in there as Charg# and as Consul about three or four times and with Henderson, and then of course with Blancke, and I'd lined up a house, and an office.

And basically when I went up there in February of '61 I just opened up a PTT box and we had a one-time pad, and hung up the sign, and that was the Embassy.

Q: What was the government like?

LUKENS: The government was headed by David Dacko who was a young fellow, and his aide de camp was Bokassa who later became the Emperor after he'd deposed Dacko. But at that point they were still quite pro-French, and there were French troops there. It was a pretty basic government. There was no other embassy but the French. The French Ambassador was a kind of wild man who'd been an adventurer, a military guy, a political appointee, and he didn't like the idea at all of having another Embassy there, and he tried to make life a little hard for me. I remember once he challenged me at a dinner party to do a sort of cossack dance with him on the floor to prove your manhood or something. But it was a very nice place. The Ubangi are nice people, interesting. They have diamonds. With a chance the country would open up and pretty soon I got a PAO, we got an Admin Officer—Roger Provencher—came in later. And it began to build up, it was a very nice period.

Q: Did you see any problems there? American interest was basically marginal at the time.

LUKENS: We saw plenty of problems in development that you have in every country. American interests were very marginal, and except for taking some diamonds, we had very little going on. But they needed everything under the sun, and they were very open to it. Again, it was perhaps even more basic than Brazzaville, which at least had a port. It was very much French oriented, and that's why they, at the beginning, resented our presence there.

Q: How about...what was the feeling you were getting from Washington? By this time the Kennedy administration had come in, in January of '61, and they were making—at least Soapy Williams was the first appointment to the State Department.

LUKENS: ...the honor second to none.

Q: Yes, there was an awful lot of attention being paid there. Were you getting any reflection of this where you were?

LUKENS: To a certain extent. And we tried to publicize what we did get, USIS, and so on. It's of general interest that Soapy never got to this area, at least not in my time. But they were fascinated by Kennedy and the beginning of the Peace Corps—of course, that was much later, when that came there too. But the whole new interest...and there were very high expectations, of course, at that point.

Q: How about...going back, because you were getting reflections from Brazzaville, because later this area turned almost as hostile as any place in Africa towards the United States. Was in that in the offing?

LUKENS: You have to separate them out a little bit. I don't think Chad was ever hostile. And Bangui the same way. They had their crazy emperor, but they were never anti-American. Gabon has always been pro-American; though they've had other problems. No, but when you go to Brazzaville, the president then was Abb# Youlou, a five-foot excommunicated priest, who walked around in Dior caftans, and was sort of ridiculed as a French puppet. He lasted until their third anniversary of independence, the 15th of August '63, and then he was deposed in a coup, by the way, by the fellow who had been president of the National Assembly. And then there were a succession of coups, and then very quickly a People's Republic was installed and the Russians came in there in a big way.

Q: This was not in the offing when you were there at that time.

LUKENS: No, it wasn't. Then, in 1965, they were throwing our people into jail, and the Embassy was closed. We didn't technically break relations, but we backed out and we didn't get back in there until 1979.

Q: Shall we close off this thing and move to Paris?

LUKENS: The reason—my family; my mother, wife and three children were killed in an airplane accident in May of '61. They were going from Bangui to Paris, for the birth of another child. So that brought our Bangui assignment to an end very quickly.

Q: Was the air communication really that dangerous at that point?

LUKENS: It was Air France which blew up, very much as UTA just has over Algeria. Nobody ever knew whether it was faulty mechanics, pilot error, or sabotage. One never knows. So I came back right after that and the Department was very nice and gave me a choice of jobs, and eventually I agreed to go to Paris where I'd been before and had lots of friends.

Q: So in Paris you were there...I have it from '61 to '63. Is that right?

LUKENS: Yes. I went there when General Gavin was Ambassador, Kennedy's Ambassador. He'd picked him out. He'd been a hero in the war, the 82nd Airborne.

Q: Yes, one of the first men to jump into France on D-Day.

LUKENS: Yes, and a very nice guy. What had happened...they kind of kept this from me. I was supposed to go and be the African expert in the Embassy, I thought. I got over there at the end of the summer. I went to the Embassy, and called on Ambassador Gavin as I was supposed to do the first day, and he asked me about my war record. And that was all he ever asked. I said, “Thank you, Mr. Ambassador,” and went back to my desk. And then I was called back in, a couple of hours later, and I discovered that most of the people in the Embassy had never even met him. And he said, “Okay, you'll do.” And I said, “What do you mean, Mr. Ambassador?” Well, it turned out that he had set it up for me to be his Special Assistant, so that I would be so busy with that, that I wouldn't have time to worry about the past. He agreed in principle, but not until he saw me. So that's when I became

his Special Assistant and that was a very active time, both personally and for Franco-American relations.

Q: Let's first talk about...more known as General Gavin, and known by many as Jumping Jim Gavin. Could you describe how he dealt in the Embassy, and his style of operation.

LUKENS: His style was military. He looked the part. He was beautifully dressed, lovely wife, nice kids, a beautiful collie. They were very photogenic. All the French papers made a big fuss over them. He didn't speak any French, and that was an enormous amount of work for everybody, trying to prepare speeches. Unfortunately, he didn't take much interest in the Embassy per se. He considered that the things would be done for him, and they were. Fortunately the DCM, Cecil Lyon, was a wonderful person—is a wonderful person, he's still living. He kept things going, and he was an enormous help to me.

But most of the time was taken up, basically, with doing the movie, The Longest Day.

Q: Darryl Zanuck did a movie, Lyon wrote the book, and...

LUKENS: I forget who did it.

Q: And Zanuck did this movie of the D Day invasion.

LUKENS: And they had the premier of the movie that we all went to, there in Paris, and he was tied up with it. The other mistake that he made, frankly, was that he wouldn't give up Arthur D. Little. He had been chairman of the board, and he went back about once a month for board meetings. I guess they paid for it, it wasn't that, so much, but it was a bit of a distraction. But people liked him. He certainly had the “pr#sence,” and we went all around the country and did this and that, to the wine festivals. It was interesting to work for him. But the frustrating thing to him was, that he took the President's representative idea very, very much to heart. He came up with the idea, for example, that the way to win the hearts of the French was to give them a nuclear submarine, and he sent a private cable to

Kennedy asking for this. And about a month later, he got back a kind of blah answer from the Desk Officer, saying the idea was sort of stupid. And that made him absolutely furious. He said he was the President's Personal Representative; he should have direct access, and he shouldn't be answered by some minion in the State Department; and, “Why didn't they take his idea seriously?” And this kind of frustration with the Washington bureaucracy, and the State Department, kind of built up in him. The result was that...I don't think he was really happy, and he didn't really stay very long.

Q: How did you see him dealing with the French? De Gaulle, but also the rest of the French government?

LUKENS: Well, of course, Kennedy's idea was a little naive; and that was, that the only way to deal with de Gaulle was to send another General. Well, when he first saw de Gaulle, de Gaulle kind of knocked him down by saying, “Well, you were just a colonel in those days,” and made it clear that the fact that he was another general didn't cut much weight with de Gaulle. That wasn't to say de Gaulle was rude, of course not. But there was a little bit of a put-down there that meant that, “sure they were both generals, and they had both fought in the war, but that really had very little to do with Franco-American relations these days.”

Q: What was the situation with Franco-American relations then, as you saw it?

LUKENS: My memory is perhaps a little hazy on this question; there are many more experts than myself. But it was a very tricky period because it was when de Gaulle was getting ready—I forget exactly when he did it—to move NATO out of Paris, up to Brussels, and break down the enormous American apparatus which we did have in France—bases all over, and the headquarters of SHAPE, and even the PXs right in the city of Paris, and so on. I can't remember when he exactly surprised us with that idea but his whole idea of French independence, and France not being a kind of satellite of the United States, permeated de Gaulle's thinking. So we had one kind of rough period after another.

The other problem was a little bit of an internal one, a little touchy, and that was between Gavin and Norstad. Norstad had succeeded in the military better than Gavin had.

Q: Norstad was SHAPE commander—was Air Force.

LUKENS: He was SHAPE commander, Air Force, and he got his fourth star and Gavin never did. Gavin, as you will recall, quit in '58 or '59 when he didn't get promoted. And then, he was the one to, sort of, take up the refrain that the U.S. was behind the Russians in the sputnik period, and that's what caught Kennedy's fancy. It wasn't that he was a Democrat, but he was complaining about the administration. So there was a little bit of irritation there, between who was responsible in France—whether it was Norstad or Gavin. I used to see this in my humble position as Special Assistant, about who would call on whom, and the precedents, and the protocol. Norstad was very relaxed about it, but Gavin wasn't.

Q: How long did you hold this Special Assistant job?

LUKENS: I did it until Ambassador Bohlen came, and then he chose Bob Anderson, who had been in the Embassy and I moved over to be the African man in the Political Section.

Q: Could you describe Bohlen, and how he operated?

LUKENS: Well, it was like night and day. He was an old pro, the French liked him, they believed in him. His French was perfect. He knew what he was doing and he knew you weren't going to change de Gaulle overnight and we had to live with it. But there were ways of managing this change so that we would not lose our traditional friendship with the French. Under Bohlen the Embassy opened up to all different areas, it was much less protocolaire. Not that he didn't know what his protocol was—I don't mean that—but everybody in the Embassy really began to take off, whether they were the Russian expert, or the African this and that; he let everybody do his thing and the time that had been spent

under Gavin—I hate to use the word wasted—but organizing his itinerary, writing his speeches, all of that stuff, was not devoted to much more substance.

Q: This is something that sometimes gets lost, and that is, by political appointees and sometimes career appointees too; but an Ambassador, if they come in, can demand a tremendous amount of time in order to give them support, whether writing speeches, arranging things, and all this, which you might say, can be their due, but at the same time it means the Embassy turns internal, and is jumping to the Ambassador's will, and he or she is the front person and much of the rest of the work is inhibited.

LUKENS: That's absolutely right and it's compounded when you've a language problem too. I mean a career Ambassador in France whips through anything in French as quickly as English, whether he's making a speech, reading newspapers, or what. Now you have a political one and you have to have somebody translate absolutely everything for him. Another distinction that I saw, in this case, and that I've seen in others, is that a political Ambassador believes that the USIS operation is to build his own image, and to toot his horn enough to win friends for Uncle Sam. So USIS would be a good example of the difference between how they had to work—the USIS officers—under Gavin and under Bohlen; completely focus on a new idea of working with the French and not just building up the Ambassador's image.

Q: This isn't off the course because I hope people who read this will understand how things work. But often a political Ambassador will think in terms that it's very important to get out and meet the people really almost as a political candidate, rather than to further American policy—that if you meet enough people, shake enough hands, and get a high profile somehow this rebounds to the good of the United States which is really not the case.

LUKENS: That's absolutely right and that is very much the case there. I mean, as Gavin went around, looking very photogenic from town to town, everybody loved it, and he laid lots of wreaths but it had very little to do with the French political internal scene.

Q: What type of work were you doing after you left...

LUKENS: When I was still in Paris?

Q: In Paris, yes.

LUKENS: In the African Section; that was fun, because de Gaulle, at that point, was making a big fuss over the Africans. They had their independence and the French were trying very hard to keep them in their sphere. So there'd be one African state visit after another and I knew some of the people...Bohlen was not very interested, but he was very helpful. He didn't have time to attend all these events. I remember being invited—I don't know whether it was Bohlen's invitation I got, or mine from the Central Africans—but when President Dacko of the Central African Republic was in Paris, they held a big fancy gala at the Elys#e. I was the American representative and after I went through the line and shook hands with a very austere de Gaulle, I got a big bear hug from President Dacko saying, “Mon-cher ami.” And as I walked out the door—they were alone in the room—I sort of turned around and I saw de Gaulle call a flunkey obviously to ask who I was. And a few minutes later the flunkey came easing up to me, when I was having a glass of champagne, and sort of said, “Who are you?” So that was kind of funny. That whole period was very interesting in Paris, and I got to know people at the Elys#e and at the Quai d'Orsay who were working on French Africa. Then my old friend, who had been Governor General in Brazzaville, Yvon Bourges, became the Minister of Defense so that was fun. I enjoyed that period very much.

Q: How did we view the French relationship in Africa? Was it one where we said, "Okay, they're more or less doing the right thing and right-on," and stay out of it, and just monitor what was happening in Africa? Or did we see opportunities?

LUKENS: What I was pushing for then, and I did later as Ambassador in Brazzaville, and I always have, is that there are so many things that we can do that don't require money, only require a gesture. The way the French would handle every African visitor to Paris was just extraordinary. I mean, perhaps going beyond what we would ever do, in setting them up with this and that, but at least the airport arrivals, and the motorcycles, and the things that appeal to them. And we don't seem to be able to handle this kind of a thing, and it doesn't cost any money but it makes people feel good. I remember writing a whole cable about how the French did it, suggesting that this would be helpful if they would learn this kind of a thing in Washington. We could do something for these countries, and maybe this is superficial, but that's the way life was, rather than suddenly an "all or nothing", waiting for a hundred million dollar aid program; but when you didn't get it, give them nothing. There was never any question, and I don't think there still is, of supplanting the French in those areas. But the Africans want another string to their bow. And when the Soviets began to come in in some of those places, we didn't want them to be exclusively French or Soviet. And I think some of the French began to realize this; that they were in a better position if the British and Americans and Germans at least were there also, allowing a little bit more flexibility to the Africans, and reducing the dilemma that faced the African leaders.

Q: Well, at that time, were the French a bit suspicious of American motives in Africa? Because we had made a big deal in Africa, the Kennedy administration. Kennedy, of course, had made that statement, as a Senator, supporting Algeria and so all of this must have concerned the French. What reflections were you getting from the French?

LUKENS: Soapy made the remark, "Africa for the Africans." Oh, well, the French were very suspicious, but you had different gradations. I think in Paris...and that was one of the things I did in my job, was to try to persuade some of the French that basically we were

not going to supplant them. That it was in their interests to have an American presence in those countries and not to be so worried about it. I think we made some progress with the French diplomats and the French officials. There was much less progress, and it's still a problem, with the French commercial sector. They had complexes, they were very, very jealous of anybody coming in and they didn't want to break up this good arrangement that they had, and still have in many places. I just came back from a trip to Abidjan, Ivory Coast. It's still very much a problem.

Q: Can you describe a little of the atmosphere within the Embassy about the attitude towards de Gaulle? Here's a dominating figure and one who was controversial then and still is...I'm talking about within the officer staff.

LUKENS: It's hard for me to recall exactly that. I mean he was the dominant figure, you're absolutely right, and nobody knew what to do about him, or how to play with him. I think we all felt that Washington was playing with him—that's the word. That the Kennedy administration did not realize the depth of French feeling, and they were being a little bit too flippant in their remarks about France in Algeria and in its former colonies. But there were ways of saying these things without hitting the French head on. And these remarks that went on weren't really doing much good. They may have made a few Africans feel good, but were basically more designed for domestic use in the U.S., and therefore there were lots of better ways to handle de Gaulle. I think when Bohlen got there the situation did improve because he was able to manage that problem. It's hard to remember exactly what people thought about de Gaulle because he was so ambiguous and you couldn't think about anything French without thinking about de Gaulle at that time.

Q: Is there anything else we might cover here? Then your next assignment you went to Rabat for a couple of years.

LUKENS: I was asked to down there as a Political-Military Officer. In the meantime, I found a lovely person in Paris, an American girl, and married her and started my new family. Her

brother-in-law, Wells Stabler was also in the Foreign Service, so I met her through him. Anyway, we went to Morocco, Rabat, in the political-military job which was, in a sense, phasing itself out, because the job there was to get us out of the bases. The interesting thing there in '63 was that Kennedy had met King Hassan II, and no one else had been present. It was just before Kennedy's assassination, and nobody had written the meeting up—well, the Moroccans knew, but nobody dared ask them. There were no Americans present. So nobody knew what the real agreement was. We basically figured out that we had to get out of the air bases but that we could keep Kenitra, the Naval base. But none of this was spelled out and as the day got closer, it became very clear that we had to get out of the bases—the Moroccans said that. The Air Force was very, very nasty, the U.S. Air Force. They wanted to do a scorched earth policy, and even had the general coming down from Torrejon in Spain, and transplanting the roses from officers' houses and taking them back up to Spain and that kind of stuff. They were very nasty and felt that they'd been thrown out. Meanwhile, we were trying very hard with the AID Mission to convert the airport at Nouasser; to get AID money in quickly (before the airport was totally sabotaged by our own air force), and converted into an international airport; with some success, not a lot, but we kept a few things from being stolen like the fire engines. I remember I was the last American at the base. There were just a handful of people left, and we had a little ceremony and pulled down the American flag and pulled up the Moroccan one. That made the French livid, because they said the agreement had been with them in 1955, and not with the Moroccans. Anyhow, we went through the whole ceremony and then the Americans got into their plane and left; and the Captain, the highest rank there, threw me the keys to his car. I drove it back to Rabat. So that was the end of that, but the tricky part came at the end of the year (1963), because nobody knew what the Moroccans were going to do. Finally what happened, two weeks before the deadline came, the King finally agreed that we would have a Moroccan flag up at Kenitra, but basically nothing else would change. It wasn't Kenitra itself, it was the communication facilities nearby that we needed for Polaris and needed to keep. That was all a very fascinating period.

Q: The Air Force, were they sort of acting almost basically on their own? This is our turf. In other words, the Ambassador really had little control.

LUKENS: Yes. But each time, we had to go all the way back with cables from the State Department to the Air Force, have a battle back here and the Air Force would send out a command and tell them to knock it off. But it was ridiculous, the problem was...

Q: So we're talking about a "dog in the manger" attitude on the part of the people who probably had a pretty good life.

LUKENS: Yes, they had a very good life.

Q: And they didn't want to leave it—sort of # la the French in Guinea.

LUKENS: Yes, very much, but they didn't get away with it. So that was an interesting time. We had a very nice tour there. Basically when the base business was done, I became more of a Political Officer working on external stuff.

Q: Were there any particular problems in the external side at that point, or was it quiet?

LUKENS: Well, again it was an awful lot with the French. I mean in Morocco, our relations with Morocco had always been very much closer than they'd been with anything in black Africa.

Q: I'm sure you've said it a hundred times—first country to recognize the United States?

LUKENS: We would work it into the speeches. But even then the French had an enormous presence, but we managed to become very good friends with the French there. I think our —political Ambassador, who has been a lawyer in Paris and spoke good French...he was a very, very nice guy—Ferguson. And the DCM, Dean Brown, is an old timer who later

became Ambassador in Senegal. So we had a good time there. Bill Crawford was Political Counselor, and it was a very nice way, particularly for me, to start my new life...

Q: In '65 you came back for two years to...

LUKENS: I worked in Personnel for Africa. One of the high points being a trip around Africa with Soapy as his interpreter.

Q: Can you describe how you saw Soapy Williams? Because he is a major player—at least he appeared to be press-wise in the American and African media.

LUKENS: I liked him very much. His wife is wonderful and I've seen him a few times since; before he died—he died a couple of years ago. He had real flair, and people laughed at him, but this is what the Africans liked. He was willing to come in, and do all the African dancing. He traveled like a Chief of State, and that was fine, because we weren't about to send a Chief of State there. And the Africans didn't know what the rank was and an Assistant Secretary wasn't all that a big deal. I mean he played with the fact that he'd been picked by Kennedy, and he was Kennedy's man to come to Africa. And everybody accepted that, and he did it with a great deal of show. He threw himself into it. He was not a political analyst, obviously. But I think he was the right man at the right time; and obviously some of what he said was a little superficial on this and that. I mean we sat for something like four hours listening to Sekou Toure in Guinea ramble on. All of this, we were interpreting for Soapy. Everybody else was going up the wall—this gibberish, the Marxist yak going on; and yet Soapy was sitting there politely taking it all in and that takes a real knack, and the Africans appreciate it. So that was part of the travel and I think he did a very good job. Obviously he put his foot in his mouth a couple of times and had to be slightly restrained but the Africans knew they had a friend. And he wasn't cheap. When they came here, he gave them lunches and dinners, opened up his own house. Of course, he was a tremendous collector of African art. Everywhere he went everybody ran behind

him packaging up the stuff and shipping it back. But I liked him and I think he was a good man for the moment.

Q: During African Personnel—we're talking about the '65-'67 period—how did you feel as far as...there's always a competition to get people for the different bureaus. How did you feel you were doing as far as staffing African posts?

LUKENS: I think very well. There was still an interest in Africa, there was excitement. We were able to promise, probably without any follow through, the way you did in Personnel, that if they went out to some little post they'd do everything and afterwards they'd get a nice job somewhere else. It doesn't always work that way. I still run into people who tell me, in my present job running around in Crisis Management, people come up and say, “Do you remember when you sent me to Africa?”

Q: I think I had an equivalent job. The attributes are usually about the same as being a used car salesman.

LUKENS: Yes, very much so. But that part was fine and I had some trips out of it, and I enjoyed working on it.

Q: You were in Personnel to '67 and then you...

LUKENS: Then we went up to Senegal.

Q: To Senegal as Deputy Chief of Mission. You were there from 1967 to 1970.

LUKENS: Yes, I was chosen by Ambassador Rivkin, when he was in Personnel looking for a DCM, and finally he asked me. And then he died suddenly, after he got there. So when I got there I was Charg# for six months until Dean Brown came. And Dean Brown was gone a lot of the time, working back in “Diplomacy for the '70s”, so I had a very interesting time there. We liked the Senegalese very much, they were the nicest people in West Africa...

Q: Could you describe the situation in Senegal?

LUKENS: Well, Senegal of course, was then run by Leopold Senghor, who was one of the original Francophone leaders. He had been nicknamed the “Black Frenchman”; his wife was French. He's one of the few people in Africa who has retired gracefully without any coup. And then came President Abdou Diouf, who was a good friend. He was then Administrator of the Plan and moved up to Prime Minister while I was there. I think Senghor lasted—I forget how many—five or six years after that. The atmosphere was very good. While again, it was in the French area, Senegalese maybe being closer to us, or a little bit more educated than the Central Africans, were very open and very friendly. It was a nice period to be there.

Q: What were American interests in the area?

LUKENS: Well, again, there weren't all that many. We tried to develop some investment in commercial exchanges and so on, and a certain amount with the Peace Corps, with the USIS exchanges, visit to the States. We had quite a lot of cultural interest. Of course, Senghor was the author of “Negritude” and also of “Francophonie”, and the French, of course, played on the Francophonie. The Negritude theme opened up for us and he was always interested in this, and with relations with black Americans.

Q: Was Senegal an area from which many of the blacks of the United States came from? Or was it more of the slave catching type?

LUKENS: You had the island of Gor## off Dakar where the slave ships were actually filled up. At this point there is a retired Ambassador, Dumont, who lives there. They have tried to get the old Consulate turned into a museum. I don't know how successful they've been with that. But an awful lot of slaves went through there. I think the majority that came to the United States eventually, came from further south in Africa rather than from Senegal. I don't think there so many Senegalese that went. That was a kind of way-station.

The Arabs would bring them in and they would leave from there. I'm not absolutely sure about that. But in the modern day context there has always been a very nice symbiotic relationship between Senegal and the United States that has survived or overcome any kind of antipathy about the French area.

Q: In this period were there any particular problems?

LUKENS: No, there really weren't. We had a lot of Congressional visits. We had some ship visits. Senegalese problems were endemic to Africa. They needed more help in this and that, and we began to get things going. I was there before the disasters in the Sahel, and our Embassy was reasonably small at that stage. Now Dakar is a much bigger place because it's an AID regional headquarters. It was a very nice period to be there and we have only fond memories of it. But I don't remember any outstanding problems per se.

Q: And then you moved again as a DCM to Nairobi in Kenya.

LUKENS: That's right.

Q: This is from 1970 to '72. How did this come about?

LUKENS: It came about because the Ambassador, Bob McIlvaine, asked if I would come, the way Personnel used to work. He'd been a friend for years dating back to when we were in the Congo days together. That was a very exciting time at that point in Kenya. There was a lot to do, a great many relationships to build with Kenya. Again, the Embassy was much smaller than it is today, and we didn't have all the regional functions that we seem to now. It was pleasant living. It was a nice place for the children and we were intensely busy there. But, of course, it was great fun to be with the McIlvaines who were close friends.

Q: Why would you be so busy there?

LUKENS: Maybe part of it was American tourism, CODELs, and everything else. People came through because they liked Kenya with all the game parks. But the British had a very different attitude from the French. When they left both these places, they didn't have the money. They welcomed Americans coming in, and so I guess we were still behind the British but we were certainly well up there as No. 2. There were American companies coming in, and all kinds of exchanges going on, and a great deal to be done in a representational way.

Q: Well, looking at both Senegal and Nairobi—one of the a thesis put forward often by people in the academic world, is that economic interests drive our relationships with countries. And I wonder if you could remark about that at that time both in Senegal and in Kenya.

LUKENS: I don't think that's true. We had more economic interests in Nairobi and Kenya than we did in Senegal, but I think that's a very cynical point of view that many people take. The French specifically take that, very much. But a lot of other people do, I mean “the oil companies decide our position on this and that” and so on. I think it's a more personal thing in Africa—puts this generality to the rest of the world, but I think that how the Chief of State feels he treated by the United States, how his top people are, is at least as important and maybe more so than any commercial efforts. Obviously commercial interests are important and we support them. But I think, when you look over the history of Africa, where our interests are basically minimal compared to the rest of the world, our influence—whatever there is—has been developed by personal contact, by diplomats, and by how we treat their people and not so much just by commercial rationale.

Q: We hope that people—one person has asked, “Please hurry it up because somebody else is writing their obituary for them and they wanted it.”

This is side 1, tape 2 of an interview with Ambassador Lukens. Were there any particular problems you can think of in Kenya that you had to deal with that might be mentioned?

LUKENS: I can't recall any particularly. I think it was a very harmonious time in our relationships. Kenyatta was still president and he liked us. There wasn't much to do there. You had undercurrents of corruption and problems going on but not nearly so much as later on. He was still the grand old man and people came to see him from everywhere. Haile Selassie went through and met him. It was a fascinating period in African history but not one that was crucial as far as U.S. relations went.

Q: Well then, jumping ahead, I notice you were back in Personnel from '72 to '74.

LUKENS: My friend Cleo Noel, who was later tragically assassinated, asked me to come back from Kenya to be head of the Junior Officer Division. It seemed like a job I couldn't turn down, but as it turned out, I was sorry, because Ambassador McIlvaine soon retired after that and I would have been Charg# for quite a while. I just felt that I was really getting my feet on the ground in Kenya. We all hated to move at that point but anyway the job was interesting for a while but not quite as interesting as being in Kenya.

Q: What was your impression—we're talking about '72-'74 of the type of junior officers coming in? Can you characterize him or her?

LUKENS: I did a certain amount of interviewing and sitting on oral boards, and some recruiting as well. My particular job there, with my people working for me, was to find the best assignments for people, and of course match requirements with people. I had the fun of having a number of A-100 Junior Officer classes out to my house; and now, when I travel around with this Crisis Management Team, I'm always running into people that remembered when I got them started in the Foreign Service. And that's a lot of fun. I think there were really excellent people in those days, there always are. I think that was very stimulating. I think the part that perhaps was less interesting, was the bureaucracy at that point, the number of levels in Personnel. I count that a little bit restrictive for my part.

Q: I served in Personnel and I must say I've always been struck by what I consider the inordinate number of people who are assigned to what is, albeit important, but certainly not of the essence. That is a sort of mechanical function, and that is the assignment, promotion and all that. It's a huge apparatus.

LUKENS: It has to be done, but it is huge, and it takes perhaps a different kind of personality from people who, like me, really feel more at home abroad and doing our job with our contacts rather than just within the bureaucracy. But, nevertheless, it was interesting. Then I got offered a job as Country Director for Iberia so I moved on to that.

Q: How did that come about? It seems like a strange move.

LUKENS: Well, I know. It was strange after my African thing. That was, as you will recall, the Kissinger period and GLOP.

Q: GLOP stood for something like...

LUKENS: Global Outlook Program; you were glopped from here to there. But it came about because Kissinger allegedly was riled at hearing the same sort of bias, he felt, from people who'd served in the same area, and he wanted to mix everybody up. But it was a bad thing in many ways. It gave some people, a lot of people, variety but we lost a lot of expertise uselessly, by people going off to jobs that they didn't particularly want and for which they weren't very well fitted; and then having to scramble, when this all came to an end, to get back into jobs that they did want to do. Anyway, it was a very interesting time to be Country Director there and since at that point Iberia—that was again one of Kissinger's efforts—he didn't want Iberia to be a separate area. He thought it should be under Western Europe, which it is now. But in those days it was just two countries, Spain and Portugal, and again I lucked into it because the guy suddenly retired for sickness and I was suddenly called upon to take the job. It was a wonderful period because it was during the Portuguese revolution and Franco's demise in Spain.

Q: What was the situation in Portugal and then also in Spain if you could explain, when you were dealing with this?

LUKENS: The situation in Portugal was very fluid when I came into it, which was just about the time of the revolution. Spinola was the president, the first one, and nobody quite knew whether he was in charge, or a group of young Turks, very left-wing officers with communist tendencies, were running the place. He was overthrown in September of 1974 and replaced by a general, Costa Gom#s. Spinola had been invited on a State visit to Washington when he was overthrown, a month before the visit was going to take place. There was a great deal of scurrying around and wondering whether we had to renew the invitation for his successor. So I was chosen to head a survey team to go to Portugal and there were three or four of us on the team, to come back with our recommendations. When we got there, we found that the Embassy was kind of out of it. There was a political Ambassador who didn't know anything and didn't have any contacts. There was a DCM who had been much too tied up with the old regime, playing polo and so on. And we went around in a very fascinating week and interviewed, Mario Soares who is now president, and saw him several times. Then we saw some of these young Turks, and their president, and we came back, and did our report. Basically, I recommended to Art Hartman, who was Assistant Secretary, that they get a career Ambassador in there in a hurry; and that it would be in our interests to build up and deal with the Young Turks and company, and that we might as well give up on the old boys because they were totally discredited; and that the socialists there were not socialists, were not verging on communism. They were much more of the old French kind, they were the best guardians against communism.

So it was agreed that the president would come. I had to arrange that, get him around and visit the White House and all that business—it was fascinating. Then, as a result of all this, they came up with the idea of sending Frank Carlucci as Ambassador. Carlucci spoke Portuguese, had political connections and he was a tough guy and able to deal with these people. So he was sent in there very rapidly, and I think, personally, did an excellent job.

He crossed swords with Kissinger because Kissinger did not believe that socialists were the mainstay against communism. Kissinger accused President Costa Gom#s while he was here of being the Kerensky of Portugal.

Q: Kerensky being the weak successor to Czar Nicholas. Well, this is a problem when you have one of the strongest Secretaries of State that we ever had. I mean, somebody with rather fixed ideas, often really academic ideas, who sees the world through that, rather than, you might say, practical eyes, and some of these things don't work out too well.

LUKENS: That was the case with Kissinger and it was an interesting hindsight to see him in action; he was even accused of being the Portuguese Desk Officer; and tried to mastermind all of this; and then it took a number of people arguing with him, including perhaps foremost Frank Carlucci, to point out that the best way to keep the country from going totally communist was to support the Socialist.

Q: But you found Carlucci was willing to go head to head with Kissinger on this?

LUKENS: Carlucci, of course as you know, had some other support too. He was a prot#g#—well, that's not fair to him—but he was very friendly to Weinberger...

Q: Who at that time was Secretary of HEW.

LUKENS: ...Carlucci was No. 2 in HEW when he left to take the job in Portugal. So he knew a lot of people in the Republican administration and that gave him a sort of independence from Kissinger that most of us didn't have. It was an interesting period and I think it all worked out. But it was touch and go for a while there, about which way they would go.

Q: Something I'd like to go back to that I find interesting. Here you have a political Ambassador, a polo playing DCM, and the Embassy is out of it. I mean, normally it would be, because Portugal has never been very high on our rank of important places, but

it turned important. And here you were, an African specialist, put into the Iberian desk problem, mainly as part of a State Department personality. A problem with the Secretary of State, among many others, but you were put a little bit "a fish out of water," and yet you went over with a team, and in a week were able to at least come back with an assessment that in hindsight seems to be the right one—I mean quite rightly seems to be the right one. What did you do that would be different than you'd be getting from an Embassy, you and your team?

LUKENS: Well, we just charged in there. The Embassy didn't like it but I mean we just demanded action. We met in interviews with everybody under the sun. Fortunately, most of them spoke French because I didn't speak Portuguese. Bob Ryan, who was Ambassador to Mali more recently, was on the team and spoke Portuguese. You will recall the name Samuels, who was a political Ambassador later on; and there was one other—I forget who. We combed that town pretty thoroughly, and we had the Department behind us, and the Ambassador there, who was a very nice fellow—I forget his name now—he had no clue what was going on, but he didn't stand in our way. So I went back and forth during that period to Portugal about four or five times.

Q: Stuart Nash Scott.

LUKENS: Yes, Stuart Scott. He was a U.S. lawyer. Very nice, but out of it. Then what came up also, we had the whole question of the Azores. We counted them as very much for NATO, it was part of the whole establishment and the regime in Portugal didn't see why we had to stay there, at least not without paying heavily for them.

Q: Was your estimate that they were willing but the price had to be right? Or was there really some question of whether they would permit us to stay?

LUKENS: Well, it changed. At first, with some of those very left-wing officers, they wanted us out of there. The Russians were coaching them and everything else. When it moved on to the socialist government and Soares coming in, then it was more a question of a price

and doing it decently. Bob McCloskey was the Ambassador at Large and I went with him; and Larry Pezzulo, and we negotiated, both on the Azores with the Portuguese, and later on with the Spanish.

Q: Well now...I mean the Azores problem and whether the Portuguese government was obviously an important one, and you as the Iberian Desk Officer—Iberian Country Director or whatever you call it—wanted to have all the best intelligence. Were you given much support by CIA on this, or not? Do you recall?

LUKENS: I think CIA woke up just as the Department did, and they had been doing very little there before the revolution. They got a new team in there too, and they began to—but even if they hadn't had a new team, and there was such a change of personnel, that whoever their old contacts were were totally outmoded. So they began to be very active too, of course.

Q: But both of you...I mean, were really playing with a whole clean slate.

LUKENS: Yes, very much so.

Q: How about the Spanish situation?

LUKENS: The Spanish situation was a little bit different. I mean we all knew that Franco would go some day. I gave up the job just before Franco died, but everybody knew one of the questions of keeping up with the Spaniards, and dealing with the bases...it was a fascinating period. The Spanish, again nothing could be done, they were all sort of stuck on square one until he died. But meanwhile the question of keeping up relations with the military, and later King Juan Carlos, and maintaining our very large establishment.

Q: But at that point...I mean Portugal seemed like the possibility of a real turn around. And Spain at that point...

LUKENS: No, no, there wasn't anything like that in Spain. Spain was interested in all of our interests, and I went around to the bases and all the Consulates a number of times and that was fascinating, but it wasn't that it was a touch and go situation like Portugal.

Q: I hate to give short shrift to the Danes. I notice you were in Copenhagen from '75 to...

LUKENS: Well, that came about for a number of reasons. I'm not quite sure why. Kissinger abolished my job for one thing, and when he decided that we didn't need a separate Iberia, he also had disagreed with me, or I had disagreed with him, on some of the policy on Portugal but that didn't help so I wasn't considered one of his favorites. But anyhow, it came about that suddenly, when the job was abolished, they suddenly needed a DCM in Copenhagen and so that's where I went. Again, it's part of the Personnel problem.

Q: I'd rather move back to Africa. Do you think there was anything...but was there any problem in Denmark?

LUKENS: Not particularly. I worked under a very political Ambassador, Phil Crowe, and then a very active career man, John Gunther Dean who has been all over the place and that was a very interesting time. He wanted to make sure that Denmark wasn't considered a retirement post for himself, or for me, and he was very good to me. We were very, very busy. More than most people would think we would be in a place like that, but Denmark was interesting, with it's connection in NATO, and the EC and so on. But I don't think an awful lot needs to be said. It was a very nice place to be and we had many friends.

Q: Then we move to what must have been a much more difficult post, and this is as Consul General in Cape Town. You were there from '78 to '82, also you straddled the Carter and Reagan administrations with quite varying policies toward South Africa. I wonder if you could explain? First, what the job was, and then talk about what you did and the situation.

LUKENS: The job as Consul General in Cape Town is kind of a curious one because the Embassy shuttles back and forth when Parliament is in session in Cape Town. So when the Embassy is right there, the Consul General becomes sort of a glorified administrative officer. When they are not there, there is more to do on one's own. It's a very large area. It's interesting, because in the Eastern Cape is where most of the black leaders come from—Mandela, and the others and Steve Biko. It's where almost all of the colored population are. It's where a lot of the industry—in Port Elizabeth—we had Ford, Goodyear, General Motors, and so on, and a lot of other companies. And, of course, it is the headquarters, more or less, of the British South Africans, the English speakers, and the more liberal people. It also is the home of the Afrikaner Intelligentsia. So it's an absolutely fascinating place to work, as well as being very picturesque.

I was very much an activist, if you want. I got to know a lot of the black leaders. Alan Boesak is one of my close friends. He is now one of the leaders you see in many of the parades. And Alan Hendrickse, who is head of the Labor colored party, and some of the labor leaders in the Eastern Cape—many of whom are still in jail. Under the Carter administration and under Ambassador Edmondson, this kind of outreach was encouraged, and it was fascinating. I was not particularly loved by the Afrikaners. I used to get hate letters, “Why don't you go off to Iran with the hostages?” and things like that because I was disliked by them, but fortunately I didn't really have to deal very much with the Afrikaners at all, with the government. That was all done in Pretoria.

Q: How is South Africa divided? I mean are there equivalents of states?

LUKENS: Yes. You have about four large provinces, the Cape Province, that I covered, which is the largest one in area. And then you have Natal, which is English-speaking also where Durban is; then the two large Afrikaner—Afrikaans-speaking provinces, the Orange Free State and the TransVaal.

Q: Whom would you deal with in the Cape Province?

LUKENS: Basically I didn't have to. I dealt with everybody there was. There was an Administrator in the Cape Province who was the sort of local governor. I knew him, and he was pleasant, although not terribly friendly. There were mayors, and there were lots of local officials, but basically the people I dealt with, were not in the government at all.

Q: This is interesting. I mean you really felt at that point that the government was not your number one priority.

LUKENS: No, because you had the Embassy. This is the difference, being Consul General, instead of being in an Embassy. The Ambassador took care of the government, as much as anybody could take care of the South African government. And I felt it was my job to get out and meet these different ethnic groups, and leaders. I think it was probably, of all my jobs, the most interesting one, the most active.

Q: What was your estimate of South Africa at that time?

LUKENS: Well, it was a frustrating place to work. I mean you just got tired of hearing the same old story; people that called themselves “liberals”—the English-speaking liberals—weren't liberal by any stretch of the imagination by our standards. They were frustrating and nothing was being changed, but they were also scared of going too far and sticking their necks out. There was a world apart, between whites and blacks. No matter what anybody said, there were various ways to bring them together, including in our own house. But you were really dealing with totally different communities. One of my most interesting periods, I think, was in Port Elizabeth when I was asked to settle a Ford strike. I'd gotten to know the black leaders and, of course, all the Ford executives, and they couldn't produce Fords without Black workers. They'd stopped; and in the old days, what had happened in South Africa when there was a strike; they'd throw all the black strikers in jail; and then they'd hire more whites. But the Blacks had gotten so that they had all the skills of the job, everything but management, so they couldn't produce Fords without them. So both sides wanted to stop the strike, but they wouldn't talk to each other. Neither one would go over

and talk with the other. So we finally had a meeting in my hotel room and we had an eight hour session and hammered out an agreement.

Q: Was this sanctioned by the Embassy? Because this is exactly what we're not supposed to do.

LUKENS: ...it sort of came about by accident when I was up there and I agreed to do it. But I told them about it afterwards.

Q: I was going to say, you could never ask and get permission to do this.

LUKENS: Ambassador Edmondson was a little surprised. He seemed to support it, and Dick Moose, who was Assistant Secretary, when he heard about it, thought it was fine. And the Ford people were happy in Detroit. I don't think the local whites were because they lost out on the agreement. The Africans were very happy. Before I left they had me into a very private fantastic ceremony in the black township which I wasn't allowed to go into. I had to sneak in there, and they met me and drove me in. They had a big party and gave me a farewell gift. It was quite impressive.

Q: Was there a marked change as far as what you were doing and how you operated in reporting, and all that, after the Reagan administration came in?

LUKENS: It was more of a subtle one. I think it hit the Embassy more quickly. Of course, we did change Ambassadors. I was there for a while with Herman Nickel, but he's not a right-wing ideologue by any means. He's a nice fellow and very open too. There was certainly a change in emphasis. The problem was not so much the personalities in our relationships, it was the perception on the part of the Blacks that Washington had turned against them, and was no longer interested. And after the administration changed, it was very much harder to get black leaders to come around and talk, because they felt they had been kind of let down. Of course this was exacerbated by the white leaders, thinking that now they could do anything they wanted and nobody would criticize them in Washington;

which, of course, wasn't really the case but it was their perception and it was borne out to some extent.

Q: There was—I guess it's finished now—but there was a major campaign about this period called...what was it called? Disinvestment, or something? Would you explain what that was.

LUKENS: ...little bit later. Disinvestment was basically getting American companies out of there. It came about from pressure within the United States by stockholders, and colleges, and everything else, to get those companies to stop dealing in South Africa. Now it was unfortunate because the companies, basically following the Sullivan principles, had set the pattern of what companies should do.

Q: Sullivan principles being...

LUKENS: Sullivan principles were named for the Rev. Leon Sullivan, a Baptist minister from Pennsylvania. He became a little bit of the front man for American companies which felt (that is, the better representatives of American companies), who felt that the best way to preserve investments in South Africa was to lead the way—a liberal way—and train and promote black Africans, help with housing, do all kinds of things like that. Get away from the old tradition and try to instill American standards in some of these American companies. And they all got together and agreed to these principles; equal pay for equal jobs. I can't remember them all but that was the general idea, and they were called the Sullivan principles after Leon Sullivan and the major companies all agreed to these. And that gave everybody a handle to go in there and see if they were indeed doing that. Some did it more than others. But while there were cases of nothing happening; one could be very cynical and say plenty of companies didn't do very much, the fact that they were doing this meant that they were the leaders, certainly vis-#-vis the South African companies, in improving the lot of black workers, and in training, and in promotion, management, and in housing, and in other sorts of things, education. And so when

disinvestment came along, the pressures on American companies from their American stockholders for these companies to get out, it basically meant backing out of there, and in a sense losing the leverage that we had because these companies behind the scenes had a lot of clout with the government, and the government didn't want to see them go. And they could say, “Listen, dammit, let these labor leaders out of jail,” and that sort of thing. And it worked pretty well behind the scenes, and we played a big role. It was one that I did often, in doing this, and I would, for example, point out where the government was doing something dumb, or an American company wasn't waking up to what it could do. Report to Washington and Washington would get on the stick with Detroit or wherever it was and word would come back for the American company to wake up. So you could do quite a lot until the disinvestment campaign came. What has basically happened since is that these companies have sold off to South Africans at a big loss. And just because they don't want to be bugged anymore by stockholders back here. And when they look at their whole profit-loss sheet, they figure, well, so they lose five per cent in South Africa but it doesn't bother them the rest of the time back here. So that was disinvestment, but that more or less came after I was there, so I still had the American companies there and that was one of the most interesting parts.

Q: At your Consulate General, and at the Embassy, were you sort of playing the equivalent to a war game in figuring out how you could see the whole situation play out in the long run in South Africa at that time? Where did you see it headed?

LUKENS: I think we were taken up too much in kind of day-to-day operations. We probably should have sat back and done more long term thinking. Various academic groups would come through, and write the old books “five minutes to midnight” it's all going to happen, and then not very much would happen. It was a very agonizingly slow change that went on and when there would be a slight bit of liberalization or letting blacks into another restaurant or something, the locals there would say, “This is just fantastic. We're really opening up.” And it would be really very slight.

Q: We're now talking in 1989, and I think two or three days ago the white beaches have been opened to the blacks. So it shows you how slowly this thing is moving. What was your impression of the police and the officialdom in your area?

LUKENS: Well, they were tough and mostly unpleasant. They were mean types, reminding one very much of the war with the Germans, Nazi types. I think that's going to be the biggest problem in the future. One of the biggest problems. De Klerk is going to have to clean out the security apparatus and he's going to really have to make changes. But, fortunately, they didn't have much success, they spied on us, they listened in to our telephones, and occasionally they bugged us. I had a black officer. They made life very tough for him, and he finally left. They were really obnoxious. There was no question about it. I hope de Klerk can get his hand on them because if he can't, you've got two different operations. You're going to have the government liberalizing, and you're going to have the security backtracking.

Q: Is there any other development that you care to mention?

LUKENS: Well, I just continue my interest in South Africa. I continue to speak about it and follow it closely and meet South Africans when they come here. I think it's fascinating, and I hope that there are some changes coming about. I think that what Crocker and now Hank Cohen have done on Namibia is extraordinary and it's going to have its ripple effect in South Africa itself.

Q: This is the granting of independence in Namibia after a long, long time, but it's happened.

LUKENS: It's happened and I think you will begin to see the pace of change pick up in South Africa. It has already, but it's going to take a long time until it really is settled.

Q: You came back in '84 to INR. What were you doing?

LUKENS: I was head of Western Europe in INR. I wouldn't say it was a job that I particularly chose. It was interesting. Basically editing work on essays on Europe. I did a couple of very interesting trips to Europe. I worked with the Agency, and other people, on assessments and with the Desk. But my interests frankly were much more in Africa, although I had had three European assignments. So I don't think there was anything very inspiring to talk about there. I had two interesting trips; one to northern Europe, and one to southern Europe. I took part in a lot of seminars, did a lot of public speaking, but to me it was sort of a way station.

Q: What the Italians would call it a parenthesis. How did you come to be named to be Ambassador to the Congo, Brazzaville?

LUKENS: Well, it's the way these strange ambassadorial assignments come. They just asked me. I had near misses on two or three others. I was supposed to get them and then political people did. I was hoping to get one all the time I was in South Africa, and finally they asked if I would go to Brazzaville, and I don't think, frankly, in their great world that they even knew that I had been there before. But I figured enough time had gone by so that there wouldn't be any problem, either personally because I had had another family, or because of the different kind of regime there. So things grind slowly. It takes nine months to produce an Ambassador, like a baby, and finally it came through and I went off in the summer of '84.

Q: You were there from '84 to '87.

LUKENS: So I actually ended up...I've had more time there than any other American diplomat. I still have.

Q: What was the situation then?

LUKENS: The situation was that, to date back in '79 we had reestablished relations and I was the third Ambassador—Bill Swing and then Ken Brown had been two years each. I

was there longer. And relations began rather slowly to thaw out. The Soviet presence was still about 700, with East Germans bugging the place, and heavy influence of the East. But the Congolese realized that this hadn't paid off very well and they were looking for American investments. So the period when I was there was one of thawing and warming up to us. And I felt that there I could play personally an important role, and we saw a certain amount of progress. We got American oil companies in, we got an American construction company, and a lot more things are still cooking away. But at the beginning there was a definite feeling of suspicion of the United States. But we kind of worked up to the time when Sassou, the president, who had come in a coup ten years earlier, became head of the OAU and took the traditional visit that most heads of the OAU do to the United States. That was a very interesting but frustrating time, because the White House refused to invite him, because in the Reagan administration, a certain number of people said they didn't want the President to meet a two-bit communist, a Marxist. And there were people who were very much against his coming. Well, he came anyway. You can't tell a person not to come to the UN if he represents all of Africa. But it was nip and tuck whether he would get into the White House. And he came to Washington, because Shultz promised him he would see the President. Shultz gave a lunch for him in New York. Governor Thornburg, who had been out to the Congo, was a great friend, had him up to Harrisburg for the day, and that was a wonderful success.

We came within an hour of getting into the White House. He was at the Willard Hotel next door and was all set to call on Bush during which Reagan would come in for the photo opportunity. But, at the very last minute, through a series of circumstances that I never will fully understand, Bush was called to the Senate to preside over an impeachment of a judge and they switched the interview to the Senate. So we drove down there. We had a wonderful hour with Bush, who couldn't have been nicer; he met us at the car, and he called in Senators Kassebaum, Lugar, Kennedy, and Hart. Sort of a seminar that lasted well over an hour. At the end Bush asked us if we wouldn't like to see the Senate in action, and somebody took Sassou up there. And then Bush turned to me and said, “How is it

going? Isn't he going to get to see the President?" I said, "Didn't you know? Of course, he was supposed to meet him and it got changed." He said he didn't know anything about it. He said, "Wait a minute." He opened his briefcase and took out a special telephone number, called the White House, and said, "Do something. We've got to get him in." And he said, "Wait a minute. They'll call you right back—my secretary is out in the hall." The Sheik of Araby or somebody was waiting to come in. So I waited outside and finally they called back and said, "There's no hope." They would try to get a phone call from the President. So I went back with Sassou to the hotel and there were very, very long faces and very unhappy people. They somehow thought it was my fault. We did manage finally to get a phone call from Reagan to Sassou in the hotel. I had to break up a meeting Sassou was having with Jesse Jackson to get him to the telephone. And then finally we tied it in through the State Department interpreter and Sassou talked to Reagan for 15 minutes. At the end he hung up and said, "That was very nice but why couldn't I have gone over there for 15 minutes." So that was very unfortunate, but everything else about the visit worked well, but it was too bad.

Q: Who was opposed to...

LUKENS: It's hard to say. There were some people who were opposed, and some that didn't push hard enough in the Department. But basically there was some opposition from the Ollie North crowd and some others who didn't see the importance of this, and didn't want to do it. There had been a red herring, in that Sassou's Foreign Minister two weeks earlier had made an anti-Semitic speech in the UN when he tied South Africa to Israel and the Nazis all in the same sentence. Nobody noticed this but the Israeli delegation, and that almost screwed up the whole visit. So I had to go to Sassou and get a personal apology from him. He didn't even know what the Minister had said. And we thought we had it back on track but the Israelis kept on bugging somebody in the White House and I think that was one of the problems. Anyhow, that was one of the high points of my time in Brazzaville.

Q: In Brazzaville, any particular problems—say, dealing with the Soviets and all this.

LUKENS: I got to be a very close friend of the Soviet Ambassador. I mean, they were very much in their element there. They weren't kept locked up and they were all over the place. They all had French cars. They were doing everything and they ran all the military. The Soviet Ambassador was a good fellow when you got to know him. He began to open up, although he used to bug me, and the French, all the time, every time we'd see him about, “why don't you stop nuclear testing,” and questions like that. But their influence is definitely waning. The real hold that they had on the Congolese was supplying spare parts for the planes, and the military depended on them, and Sassou depended on his military and they wanted their toys. So when the Soviets began to cut those down, he had to weigh the balance. Whether he could keep his military in line without the toys, and thereby snub the Soviets, or not.

Q: Well, looking at this—I mean, after all, you'd served in that whole area for a long time, did you see this as really any threat to anybody, or is this just that the Soviets had a one little foot hold and they were using it but it wasn't going anywhere.

LUKENS: No. I don't think it was a threat at all. I think the Americans tend to exaggerate. It wasn't a threat at all. Again, you have to be, and I'm probably as inconsistent as the next guy, but you have to take some of this, not take it at face value. They mouthed all the slogans, “down with imperialism,” “down with capitalism,” and so on. And they're opening up and asking for investment, and being perfectly open to us. You have to ride with the punches. I think some Americans are too liberal. They say these people are hypocritical. Well sure they are, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be flexible.

Q: I was Consul General in Naples and we had a communist mayor who used to asked me, “When could he get more fleet visits from the Sixth Fleet?” Particularly repairs, it meant jobs.

LUKENS: I remember the famous communist mayor in Martinique, Aim# C#saire, had the most wonderful time giving him a bunch of books on Lincoln. And they were scared in Washington that he was going to start a communist rebellion in Martinique. So it was a very satisfying time in Brazzaville, except for not getting Sassou into Reagan there, but nevertheless we liked the people very much. I felt I had good access. As good as anybody. Sassou was a cold fish in a way. He didn't want lots of visits from Ambassadors, even the French. But the other people did, pretty much, so I felt it was a very productive three years.

Q: Well, looking back on this, what gave you your greatest satisfaction, would you say, in your career?

LUKENS: It is hard to compare because there were so many different things. I mean, it was very exciting doing that Portuguese bit; it was very interesting for the three years in South Africa, and, of course, it was satisfying to have my own mission in Africa; and to feel that I had accomplished something in Brazzaville. It's very hard to compare. People always say, “Which one did you like best?” Well, they're all so different that it's really hard to compare. But I don't think...I can't compare, but all of these posts have been interesting and they've had a certain somewhat illogical track to them.

Q: Well, I think we're really just at the end of the tape and we might as well quit.

LUKENS: That's very nice. Thank you very much.

Q: Thank you.

End of interview